**Most Significant Change stories from Africa RISING project of Ethiopian Highlands**

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**Most Significant Change (MSC) stories in Africa RISING**

In Africa RISING project of the Ethiopian highlands, one of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms used to understand and capture how the wide range of research interventions are impacting institutions and bringing changes in the lives of farmers is through Most Significant Change (MSC) stories. The changes can focus on any of the *Feed the Future* indicators:

* Gender integration,
* Improved nutrition,
* Public-private partnership,
* Research and capacity building,
* Climate smart development and agriculture sector growth.

Most Significant Change is an M&E approach that helps record stories of change from various people involved. It then lets these people discuss what constitutes the most important change. The MSC approach both creates a better understanding of the mechanisms of change brought by the project among all parties involved and it also helps feature powerful narratives about how the program has concretely impacted rural communities in Ethiopia (ILRI, 2015).

In 2013, before starting the exercise, Africa RISING organized a training workshop at ILRI Addis for experts of local stakeholders from all sites. During the event participants were familiarized with the MSC tool as part of other IP monitoring and evaluation tools. The tool was also presented and discussed on the first round of IP meetings whereby other IP members also got the chance to have a feel of the approach. IP monitoring and evaluation champions from local partners’ institutions were selected to lead on the story collection and selection process. The first batch of stories was collected in late 2014, around the time when the project started to see the fruits of its research for development (R4D) interventions. A story collection template with a set of brief questions and a guideline for collecting change stories was developed and used.

**Change story identification criteria**

Some criteria were developed, based on experiences from previous initiatives (de Leon *et al.,* 2009) and in consultation with the ILRI innovation platform team and IP technical group members. Based on this, the team had a general idea about what constitutes “change” in the Africa RISING (AR) context, which can be either or all of the following characteristics:

* A **“Change”** reflects AR **core research agendas and *Feed the Future* focus areas**: Inclusive agriculture sector growth; maintained/improved natural resource base; gender integration; improved nutrition; public-private sector partnership; research and capacity development;
* The change mentioned has substantial effect on external end users or stakeholders / is relevant for development (has emerging potential for impact).  This effect has good probability of repercussions / growth / expansion in the future;
* It demonstrates the quality of the R4D approach, research and capacity building;
* It implies a high level of collaboration with stakeholders/engagement with partners/next users of research; it presents a linking value;
* It denotes unexpected results, surprises, unexpected success under adverse conditions; it presents a high level of applied adaptive management / innovation in response;
* A quality story that catches the attention of the reader - How it is told?

**The process of selecting MSCs**

After potential change stories that have been identified by IP members are captured (recorded by someone in the IP team), IP technical group (TG) members will go through a process of selecting “most significant stories” as proposed:

1. IP TG members agree to use the same criteria in order to choose a story
2. Each IP technical group member grades all the stories against these established criteria
3. Everybody reads the stories (individually), and chooses the one that best answers the question: "From among all these significant changes, what do you think was the most significant change of all?"
4. The group holds a conversation about the value of the reported changes, the stories themselves, and their individual choices
5. The group decides which stories are felt to be most significant (preferably by consensus, and in the failing case by a majority vote)
6. The reasons for the group’s choice(s) and their feedback on the stories is documented.

A total of 15 change stories were collected from 2014 to 2015 but after a round of reflections with the IP technical group members, it was agreed to include 9 of the stories as most significant change stories and to keep the rest of the stories until the R4D activity on which the story is based matures and brings potentially more interesting results.

The nine selected stories are introduced below. Their significance is consistently commented on, as well as other feedback on the story by the people who reviewed it.

## The nine stories

**Domain of change:** Gender Integration; Improved Nutrition

**Name of person recording story:** Zekarias Bassa (Researcher at Areka Agricultural Research Center and IP Gender champion)

**Location:** Hadya zone, Lemo Woreda in Upper Gana kebele

**Date of recording:** 3 April 2015

**Name of storyteller:** Tadelech Lachemo (a household head female farmer)

**The story:**

*Tadelech Lachemo is a female household head who took part in Potato seed multiplication in June 2014. She was provided with 7 quintals of improved (Gudene) potato variety. The specific potato variety was given based on her preference from the Africa RISING field day experience in her kebele.*

*Before her involvement in Africa RISING research intervention she was a productive safety net program (PSNP) beneficiary for about 8 years. This is a government and World Food Program (WFP) initiative where the least poor and chronically food insecure farm householders are provided with a combination of food and cash transfers as a compensation to their labor contribution in local development work.*

**Significance:**

On the first year of her involvement she produced about 70 quintals of Potato and she was able to return back to the kebele the 7 quintals of improved potato seed she took from the project. Tadelech earned about 23000 Birr from the sale of her produce (fresh and seed potato) to fellow farmers. She set a market price of 500 birr per quintal in consultation with the AR project and local government administrators. She was kind enough to sell to four other female household farmers with lower price of 400 birr per quintal so that they will have better opportunities like her. She also gave as a gift to her family 4 quintals of potato and 3 quintals for very poor farmers who couldn’t buy the seed. Her potato was planted in one timad of land (a quarter of hectare). The family had consumed around 10 quintals of potato at home during the cropping season which has contributed to household dietary diversity. From the money she obtained, she supported her son with 10,000 birr to construct a house. For herself, she is constructing a traditional restaurant house with 30 corrugated iron sheets. With a support from the project she has also constructed Diffused Light Stores (DLS) for storing potato seed. She explained that before the new variety was introduced to her village, she and many other farmers used to plant once in a year. Now many are planting potatoes twice a year in both Belg and Meher cropping seasons. She used to plant only 1 Quintal of the local variety and harvest 4 quintals per year. Before the introduction of the DLS the maximum seed she used to save - not for sale but as planting material - was about 0.5 quintals; she is now able to save about 50 quintals of quality potato seed for sale and planting material. As she is a female household head with some labor problem, she hires labor on a daily basis during planting, weeding harvesting and storing. She pays about of 500 birr for weeding and 600 birr for harvesting. She aspires to increase her agricultural productivity more and run a profitable restaurant.

**Feedback on the story**:

* A very good story capturing gender aspects
* It would have been good if additional women were included in the story

**Domain of Change:** Climate smart development; Capacity development; gender integration

**Name of story teller/s:** Wondye Desta (Gudo Beret kebele Administrator)

**Name of person recording story:** Shimelis Mengistu, Temesgen Alene (Africa RISING site coordinators) and Amhaeyesus Belete (Bedre Brehan University staff and IP TG member)

**Location**: Basona Worena Woreda, Gudo Beret kebele

**Date of recording:** 22 July 2014

**The Story:**

*As part of a massive government soil and water conservation campaign, our kebele watershed development work was started in 2012 at the upper catchment. At the beginning farmers’ participation was limited to their own village. We faced a number of challenges in terms of knowledge and skills of farmers and experts, scientific evidence and effective farmer mobilization. We have been organizing trainings and community meetings to improve the level of farmers’ participation on physical activities. It was very important to work with a third party to deal with technical and technological gaps. In 2014, we had a discussion with the Africa RISING project on how they could support and contribute this government soil and water conservation work. We knew that the Africa RISING project had been active in our kebele as our office is a member of the innovation platform. Africa RISING involvement in the government initiative was instrumental in developing the capacity of our kebele. A technical training supported with a field visit to another watershed was organised for Woreda and Kebele experts by the project. Following the training, a team composed of experts from Woreda and Kebele, and selected model farmers from the watershed community got the opportunity to participate on the experience sharing visit arranged by the project to model watersheds in Tigray region. As member of a visiting team, I observed a huge physical and biological soil conservations, big water harvesting and collection structures, active gender participation, and development of cash and food crops in a watershed. Moreover, free grazing of animals had already been properly controlled. We have learned that all these interesting activities in Tigray were accomplished in the presence of many challenges including high moisture stress (less rain) and a difficult topography. Our team of experts learned that what we have done in our watershed is far from enough and we wanted to replicate the best practices we saw in Tigray region.*

**Significance:**

After coming back to the kebele, the visiting team held discussion with farmers in the watershed and the team members presented what we observed during the visit and jointly developed activity plan with the community. We were then supported by a team of researchers from Africa RISING project and Mekelle University on technical aspects of watershed management. We were able to construct a lot of water percolation pits and deep trenches and gully rehabilitation structures. We also worked in fostering active female participation by organizing 60 women working groups. Another watershed group of 60 farmers was established to produce highland fruits brought by Africa RISING with harvested and irrigated water. We are now seeing promising results on the moisture status and litter accumulation in the watershed where those conservation structures are developed. We would like to see more capacity development activities for our experts and farmers from Africa RISING project. If there is future work in introducing multipurpose plant, we would like to see more fodder technology options suitable for the area in addition to tree lucerne and phalaris grass.

**Feedback on the story**:

* The story could mature even more if some time is given
* Can be a change story as it touches the major teams of FTF focus areas (Climate smart development, Capacity building and Gender integration)
* Good example of partnership with local government development agenda

**Domain of Change:** Inclusive Agriculture Sector Growth; Improved nutrition; Gender Integration

**Name of storytellers:** Bahfta Meresa (Female farmer) and Belete Kiros (Male farmer)

**Name of person recording story:** Harnet Abrha (Researcher at Alamata research center & and IP TG member) Gebrehiwot Hailemariam (CIP representative in the site and IP TG member)

**Location:** Endamehoni Woreda

**Date of recording:** 4 September 2015

**The Story:**

*We started working with Africa RISING project in 2013. On a meeting organized at our kebele, we showed interest to participate in wheat and potato participatory varietal selection (PVS) and faba bean and potato community based seed multiplication (CBSM). Experts are usually the ones who select model farmers to take part in any research or development initiatives. Africa RISING has a different approach whereby the research ideas and criteria were presented to us and it was us who decided where and when to participate by taking into account our interests, resources and capabilities.* Belete Kiros explains, “*I never tried potato on my field due to the fact that I have little knowledge of potato production. I believed that producing potato will not change my life. Moreover, I have no access to irrigated land to plant the local potato varieties that matures in about 6 months. But the improved potato varieties introduced by Africa RISING project, as I witnessed during field-days organized in my kebele on potato PVS, are early maturing and can be planted under rainfed conditions. It is also high yielding with good quality and disease tolerance. Observing this, I was involved in community based potato seed multiplication.*

**Significance:**

Belete has witnessed a significant change on the yield and house hold income from potato production. The same plot of land (900m2) that used to give him 200kg of wheat grain has produced 3000 kg of potato tuber seed. In terms of value he earned 27,000 birr from the potato produce compared to an average 1920 birr from his wheat harvest which is about 14 times higher. He is also helping his fellow farmers to adopt and improve their potato productivity. He explains *“I* *registered 10 neighboring farmers that showed interest to learn potato production practices and who ended up buying potato seed from me. I also constructed Diffused Light stores (DLS) for storing the seed.”*

The female farmer, Bahafta Meresa, has tested different varieties of potato on her farm under rainfed condition. The three improved varieties of potato namely *Belete*, *Gudene* and *Jalene* were tested in comparison with the local potato variety giving a respective marketable yield of 51, 47, 44 and 13 tons/ha tuber yield. For Bahaftu the noticeable benefit from improved potato production is increased yield, quality and early maturity. She harvested 1600kg of improved potato from 0.3 hectare of land, earning about 6000 birr from the sale of potato tubers for seed. She explains *“The land size I own is only 0.3 ha and with the previous production practice I was unable to feed my family. However, thanks to the improved potato production practice I am much better off in feeding my family and making additional investment.”*

From the potato income Belete has constructed a new and modern residence house (with corrugated Iron sheets), purchased agricultural inputs (fertilizer and seeds), clothes for household members and consumable items and avoided selling productive assets such as cattle to cover these expenses. Bahafta is able to pay a loan for a motorized water pump, which she was planning to pay from the sale of her dairy cow and bought agricultural inputs that would increase productivity from her small plot of land. Owning the motorized pump enabled me to produce twice a year by pumping water from a distant shallow hand-dug well.

Potato is also an important food security crop. The food scarce months of the year are August-September, when other crops are still green in the field. However, potato is ready during this period which covers the food gap of households. Farmers in the area have solely been dependent on cereals but now potato has helped to diversity their dietary food consumption. Bahaftu explains *“Potato can be considered as a lazy-man food at it requires less labor and energy to cook. The labor required for potato production is high compared to other cereal crops particularly to women but the benefits exceed.”* Having seen the benefits and experiences of potato production from these farmers, many other farmers are adopting potato production. Apart from becoming learning grounds to the community, the plots of both farmers were also used as a source of improved potato seed for the community members. The farmers say that there is high demand for the expansion of potato production technology but there needs to be increased seed availability, new practices on postharvest handling, creating market linkages and nutrition promotion activities.

**Feedback on the story**:

* Clearly captures the change brought by adopting potato technology
* Reach in information and good support in quantitative data
* With a slight rearrangement of themes it can become a very good change story

**Domain of Change:** Public-Private Partnership

**Name of storyteller:** *Habtamu Hagos*

**Name of person recording story:** *Elias Damtew (Africa RISING researcher)*

**Location:** *Endamehoni Woreda*

**Date of recording:** *Nov. 2/2014*

**The Story:**

*When I joined Endamehoni Woreda office of agriculture in 2013, the office had already started working with the Africa RISING project. But I am well are of the projects activity from the outset as I was one of the team members in the Woreda administration office who linked the project with the office of agriculture at the beginning. Since I joined the office of agriculture, I was involved in site selection for the research interventions and I also participated in mid-season and end-season evaluations of trials on wheat, faba bean and potato. At the end season evaluation of the first trials, I have seen an unprecedented 94 quintal/hectare of wheat harvest and 528 quintal/hectare of Potato harvest. This was amazing; for both crops, we have never seen this amount of produce in the whole Tigray region. The highest regional productivity we saw for wheat was 74 quintals/hectare some 8 years ago on a model farmer farm plot. Right after we saw this we came back to our office and started documenting the whole process of the experiment especially on input use and management practices so that we will be able to use it as ‘bench mark’ for the woreda’s office of agriculture’s 5-year plan. We have already sent out the plan to all kebeles in the woreda to do the same. When we captured the process as ‘best practice’ we included interesting pictures in order to share it with higher level policy makers and researchers in the region. We have recently shared the experience with regional authorities and Mekele university researchers at the regional platform. Some researchers were skeptical about AR research evidence as they have never produced these amounts on their previous experimentation. But after we presented our evidence/documentation, it became clear to them that it was achievable and now it is even being proposed and pushed to be a bench mark at regional level where the region will work to scale up/out the practices to a wider farm households.*

**Significance:**

We have mostly been pessimistic on the possibility of increasing productivity to this level in our area. Africa RISING research intervention significance starts defying this thinking among some experts. Evidence-based planning has always been a gap for us, so I think using Africa RISING research evidence for our planning is also a good thing for us. A local evidence for our local planning is also another important thing for our experts and administrators. We don’t have to always refer to evidence elsewhere in and out of the country. The management and agronomic practices we learned while documenting the process were also instrumental in developing our capacity. Our woreda office has also been commended at regional level for coming up with evidence that can be scaled out to other parts of the region.

**Feedback on the story:**

No feedback collected. It will be presented in the next round of IP meetings for reflection and feedback.

**Domain of Change:** Inclusive Agriculture sector growth

**Name of storyteller:** Negash Syum (Tsibet Kebele farmer), Keshi Birhanu Aregaw (Embahasti Kebele Farmer)

**Name of person recording story:** Tesfay Hagos(Tigray Agricultural Research Institute/TARI/ Livestock Nutrition Researcher and AR Monitoring and Evaluation champion)and Mohamed Ebrahim(AR site Coordinator)

**Location:** Endamehoni Woreda

**Date of recording:**4September 2015

**The Story:**

Negash Siyum and Birehanu Aragaw are among the farmers who are voluntarily participating in the Africa RISING livestock feed management research intervention. These two farmers tell their narratives representing fellow farmers on the intervention.

*In June 2014 the Africa RISING project organized a community meeting and presented a number of research proposals where participant farmers showed interest to participate in different proposals. Out of the listed technologies we and 34 other farmers were interested to work on crop residue management and utilization research. At the beginning of November 2014, the project constructed feed storage and feed trough prototypes for two farmers in two kebeles and invited all participant farmers to jointly evaluate the technology. During the event we came up with an idea to slightly modify the design of the storage and feeding trough to make it even more efficient and it was very welcome by the researchers. We then proceeded to the construction of the new modified feed storage and feeding trough. Among the criteria listed to participate in this research protocol were: interest, access to eucalyptus tree (constructing material), livestock ownership and crop residue availability. During construction the project provided industrial material like corrugated iron sheet, nail and covered carpentry costs, while we contributed wood and labor.*

**Significance:**

Previously, we used to pile up our straw out in the open, exposing it to rain, sun, termites and different forms of contamination and misuse. This mismanagement wastes at least a third of our stored feed. Because of this and other management problems our crop residue, the most important feed, is totally depleted in the months of May-June forcing us to purchase feed or to destock our animals. A neighboring farmer for example has spent about 800 birr just to buy additional feed. In our traditional practice we do not store pulse residue as it easily gets spoiled, leaving it in our threshing ground to be eaten by pack animals. The new Africa RISING livestock feed technology is now saving about 30% of our scarce feed resource. The structure is built well above the ground and has a good roof top that protects the feed from external damage. It is also helping us to store a mixture of pulses and cereal residues, which increased both the quality and quantity of the feed. The technology has enabled us to have enough feed for our animal until green feeds are available again.

Similarly a sample feeding trough was also constructed in both kebeles and demonstrated together with the feed storage facility. The technology was new to our farmers and brought a lot of interest among many of us. Traditionally we feed our animals on the ground leaving the feed wasted and contaminated by animal urine and dung, trampling and scavenging birds. Our children were also wasting too much time in feeding the animals even at times of very cold weather. We again used to lose about a third of our feed due to our poor feeding practices. With the new feed trough, we are able to curb the feed wastage and weight loss of our animals during dry season. A fellow farmer for example, through this management, fattened a beef cattle and sold for 11000 birr that he bought 7000 birr.

From the story one can see that with the traditional storage and feeding system the average feed wastage was about 50% of the total collected cereal straw and farmers were forced to purchase animal feed with the hard earned money from their subsistence agriculture.

**Feedback on the story**

* Good success story of AR livestock feed intervention
* Need to show some examples of technology benefits on livelihoods
* Needs a bit of work on the story flow and can be a significant change story

**Domain of Change:** Public private partnership

**Name of story teller/s:** Workalign Asefa and Suleman Duri, (Sinana Woreda and Zonal office of Agricuture), Tesfay Hagos (TARI researcher), Alemu Lema, Dejene Nigatu (Medawalabu University),

**Name of person recording:** Mohammed Ebrahim (Africa RISING site coordinator) and Habtamu Hagos (Woreda Office of Agriculture expert)

**Location:** Endamehoni and Sinana Woredas

**Date of recording:** 4 September 2015

**The Story:**

*Africa RISING key governmental partners explain that their involvement in the project started from the diagnostic studies such as SLATE (Sustainable Livelihoods Asset Evaluation), PCA (Participatory Community Analysis) and value chain assessments. Based on findings of the assessment studies, their institutions participated in prioritizing major agricultural problems and proposing possible interventions, and in leveraging technical support during research implementations. In mid-2014, one Woreda and two Kebele level Innovation platforms (IP) were established in all the sites that comprised key governmental and non-governmental actors. The Woreda IP has about 8 technical committee members in which all institutions of the storytellers were represented. Woreda IP Technical committees also selected 4 champions of Gender, IP communication, IP facilitation and monitoring and evaluation (M & E) in all the sites. The traditional research and development approach in the project sites has been that every organization/project is mostly engaged on its own activities without identifying and actively involving other relevant actors. This approach has fallen short of bringing a sustainable solution to the developmental challenges the community is facing. According to the experts, this also hindered efficient use of scares resources and fostered duplication of efforts. Likewise, Communities did not have the chance to participate in planning and technology evaluation. Simply Researchers and experts bring technology to the farmers. Such ‘supply-driven’ model has failed to meet the needs of communities and has played a role in developing skepticism towards technologies and improved practices. The storytellers assert that this approach has contributed to low technology adoption and diffusion in their sites.*

**Significance:**

Innovation platforms are a new approach to all their institutions. The storytellers believe that the IPs gave them a unique opportunity to come together and share knowledge and experience with different and new stakeholders. The continuous dialogue was instrumental for them to have better understanding of the real agricultural and development challenges faced by the community and to jointly plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the different research for development (R4D) activities. These IP members have seen a numbers of technologies successfully introduced through the IP approach. New varieties of Potato, wheat, faba bean, fodder and feed management practices are now being adopted by a considerable number of farmers and are bringing considerable impacts on farmers’ livelihood.Improved potato varieties, faba bean and wheat significantly increased farmers’ production and are replacing less productive local varieties. For example the average wheat production per hectare in Endamehoni site was about 45 quintals but through Africa RISING participatory variety selection (PVS) and seed multiplication interventions about 85 quintals of what is produced in similar farm plots. Through the intervention farmers have witnessed an increase on potato production from 125 to 350 per hectare. Oat-vetch forages introduced by the project are supplementing the other feed sources to improve animal nutrition. The joint diagnostic studies revealed that farmers in Africa RISING sites faced serious livestock feed shortage. Africa RISING introduced feed trough and storage structures that brought substantial impact on feed availability through saving about 50% of the scarce feeds. The storytellers also emphasized the importance of innovation platforms to share scares resources among themselves. For instance, in Sinana, after farmers took part in mid and end-season evaluations of potato trials, farmers developed high interest for improved potato varieties and requested the Woreda Agricultural Office for improved potato varieties introduced by Africa RISING project. However, the woreda couldn’t comply because of resource limitations. Learning about the issue at stakeholder meetings, Madawalabu University (MWU) allocated about 110,000 ETB and bought 7,500 kg of potato seed and delivered to the farmers through a revolving seed base. Taking the Africa RISING high value fruit research intervention as a bench mark, the University is also working scaling out work by farmer-requested potato seed from Jeldu woreda (West Shoa), transported to the site and dispatched through a revolving seed base to 22 farmers at Ilu-Sanbitu Kebele. In addition to this, MWU has been buying 2,400 Apple seedlings from Chencha woreda of SNNPR region and distributing to 240 farmers found in 8 Woredas.

For successful technology uptake and impact researchers, extension, private sectors, other stakeholders, including farmers, should use similar multi-stakeholder processes. The Tigray Agricultural Research Institute has recently established**“**Agricultural development Partners Linkage Advisory Council” (ADPLAC) but it is weak at the grass root level and they want to adopt the IP approach to the ADPLAC to have better impact on the ground. ADPLAC is more of an expert group while the IP has room for farmers and private actors’ involvement. Unlike ADPLAC, IPs take far more responsibility and go beyond advising and lead on planning, monitoring and evaluation of research interventions.

**Feedback on the story:**

* The story clearly shows the importance and fruits of bringing researchers, extension, farmers and other stakeholders together
* More quantitative data support would make it even better….
* It could have been better if it showed benefits of non-intervention farmers

**Domain of Change:** Research and Capacity Development

**Name of storyteller/s:** Sultan Usman, Shure Seboka, Teklu (Researchers at Sinana Agricultural Research Center)

**Name of person recording story:** Elias Damtew (Africa RISING researcher)

**Location:** Sinana Agricultural Research Center

**Date of recording:** 11December 2014

**The Story:**

*Our research center first got involved in Africa RISING project with its quick-win projects. Sinana, Kulumsa and Bako research centers from OARI (Oromia Agricultural Research Center) took part in the studies. We, together with ILRI researchers, did the data collection and analysis of the quick-win project studies. We presented the study result at ILRI Addis and out of the three research centers we were selected as Africa RISING partner for the Oromia region. Working with Africa RISING brought an opportunity to our institution in promoting technologies that are developed by our center and this is improving our research impact. Oat and Vetch varieties for forage experiment, Shalo and Mosisa faba bean varieties are among the varieties we released and is being experimented and promoted by the Africa RISING project. We have also agreed to introduce durum wheat, food barley and field pea varieties for the next season. In terms of agronomic practices, we have been unable to break the mono-cropping pattern in the area. Africa RISING is helping our effort in breaking this cycle as it brought a number of interventions on different crops, livestock feed and natural resource management at a farming system level.*

**Significance:**

From the very beginning the Africa RISING project started with capacity development activities. We were trained on a number of diagnostic tools (FEAST, TechFit, VCA) that we were not familiar with. Our active engagement in data collection and analysis with the tools has given us the opportunity to see their practical application on the field. Our biophysical researchers also took an intense ten-day training on agricultural research methodologies that would for sure enhance their field research capacity. The participatory research approach that Africa RISING implemented during the quick-win and PCA studies and the quick field interventions without wasting much time on a massive baseline survey is another lesson we took from Africa RISING. Africa RISING came up with a new research and extension approach through innovation platforms that will help us to improve our actor network and innovation capacity. This practical implementation of the innovation systems perspective is also influencing our local actors’ attitude on the power of working in partnerships - this has also helped our acceptance by farmers. Unlike other projects, Africa RISING at the research site runs its fund and human resources on its own, which made it easier for us to mostly collaborate and focus on field research. If the fund has been channeled to our institutions, which had been mostly the case, we would have been less efficient due to our finance bureaucracy to make use of the funds timely and effectively.

Sinana researchers are very grateful for being able to get attached as graduate fellows with the AR project. Two of the storytellers, Sultan and Teklu, are now being sponsored and supervised by AR researchers on their M.Sc. thesis work. They believe this has helped them to do high quality research with international researchers apart from the logistical/financial support that they are getting from the project.

We are learning a lot from Africa RISING and ILRI’s effective way of communicating research outputs. We are always amazed to quickly find online the research outputs that we collaborated with. We have a lot of research outputs produced over the years in our center in particular and in the national system in general and we need to develop a similar research outreach system that would help us increase our research impact.

**Feedback on the story:**

* No feedback collected. It will be presented in the next round of IP meetings for reflection and feedback.

**Name of storyteller:**Kelil H/Ahmed (Kebele administrator and farmer), Kasim Abdi, Kedir Abdi, Temam Mama (farmers)

**Name of person recording story:**Shure Soboka (Sinana Agricultural Research Center Researcher and IP M&E champion), Endeshaw Tadesse (Africa RISING assistant site coordinator)

**Location:** Sinana woreda

**Date of recording:** 4 November 2015

**The story:**

*We are farmers working with the Africa RISING project in our Kebele. Wheat is the most dominant crop in our area for quite some time and most of us do not have the experience or knowledge of cultivating other crops, especially pulses and tuber crops. However, the researchers organized a number of meetings with us and encouraged the community to try rarely cultivated crops and let us see the performance on the ground. After the first research trials in 2013, the community participated in mid-season and end season evaluations, and farmer field days where many farmers in the kebele got the chance to see the performance, share experiences and discuss challenges. Africa RISING also created a stage where researchers and experts from different institutions came to our village and respond to our questions and shared their knowledge and skills.*

**Significance:**

Africa RISING project has brought a number of changes in our farming community regarding crop production practices. The introduction of potato and faba bean crops into a wheat-dominated farming system is contributing a lot to breaking our cereal-based mono-cropping farming system. We are introduced to irrigation technologies and practices like rope and washer and tractor-mounted motor pumps, Diffused Light Store /DLS/ which we are not familiar with. On the other hand, establishment of Innovation Platform /IP/ provides us with a stage to discuss our concerns and experiences. Trainings and experience sharing visits within and outside the kebele, gave us opportunity to learn new skills and exchange lessons with other farmers in other Africa RISING sites. Africa RISING is doing a lot of activities to improve the livelihood of our farmers through introduction of improved farming practices. However, little has been done on improving our livestock breeds and their management. It is also good if Africa RISING works on introducing garlic varieties and other horticultural crops.

**Feedback on the story**

* A generic story but it is good as it touches upon lessons at community level
* Tries to touch a number of areas, it would have been great if it is more focused

**Domain of Change:**

**Name of storyteller:** Kalil (Farmer)

**Name of person recording story:** Shure Soboka (Researcher at Sinana Agricultural Research Center)

**Location:** Sinana Woreda/District

**Date of recording:** 4November 2015

**The Story:**

*My name is Kelil and I am a community leader and a farmer at Ilu Sanbitu Kebele. I happened to know about the Africa RISING project well before the start of the research interventions. A group of people came and discussed with us their intent on doing research with our farmers on selected crops like, wheat, faba bean, potato, forage crops and trees. In the first year, I participated only on forage crop adaptation trial as I had fear to participate on potato and faba bean trials due to red ant and human pest problems that are damaging the two crops. However, other farmers took the risk and participated on potato, wheat and faba bean trials. I participated to mid and end season trial evaluations, field days and IP meetings. From the end season evaluation, I observed that the demonstrated potato varieties especially, ‘Gudane’ is found to be high yielding and there was no ant problem despite my fear. In addition to what I observed from the trial, experts from different organizations working on the project encouraged us to participate on the different research activities. I decided to participate on potato seed multiplication.*

**Significance:**

During ‘Ganna’ season of 2014, I have planted potato (Gudane) variety given by the project on 2000m2 plot area and harvested 106 quintals. This is an incredible performance for me. I sold 30Qts of the produced potato during harvest for 9000 birr, 60Qts of potato seed was sold for 36,000, 10Qts was used as planting material and the rest for home consumption. Previously, I used to sell other grains /wheat and barley to buy agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer, herbicides, and fungicides. But, this time I used the money obtained from the sale of potato to cover costs for the inputs. In addition, the project supported me with materials and skilled manpower for constructing Diffused Light Storage (DLS). Without this storage, I would have been unable to properly preserve the potato produce for seed which has earned me the largest income. In 2015 ‘Ganna’ season, I planted 0.5ha of land and harvested 163Qts, which is relatively low yield and is attributed to this year’s rain shortage. This season I sold 121Qts at farm gate for 36,300 birr and saved 42Qts for seed. In Ilu-Sanbitu Kebele there was no such strong potato production system and there was also a knowledge gap on the production, storage, and marketing aspect. Through participating on Africa RISING initiated demonstrations, field visits and trainings, I got the necessary knowledge and skills about potato production, post-harvest handling and marketing. Moreover, the introduction of potato in the farming system of the kebele improved the crop production practices, income diversification and contributed to household nutrition improvement. As I have access to water for irrigation I have a plan to produce more potatoes throughout the year and get more income. I have learned that there is high market demand for potato in the local market and in the neighboring districts which brushed off my previous fears regarding the potato market.

**Feedback on the story**

* Good evidence on the potential of breaking wheat mono-cropping pattern in the site
* It shows how AR interventions are influencing influential local people

Annex

**Most Significant change story collection template**

**Background**

Africa RISING IP research team would like to capture stories of significant change that may have resulted from its Research-for-Development intervention through Innovation platforms. This will help us to improve what we are doing, enable us to acknowledge and publicize the successes together and draw lessons for similar future research engagements using R4D platforms.

**Contact details**

We may like to use your testimonies for publication or may share it with the wider audience

Do you, (the storyteller):

• want to have your name on the story (tick one) Yes  No 

• Consent to us using your testimony for publication (tick one) Yes  No 

*\*If they wish to remain anonymous, don’t record their name or contact details*

Name of storyteller:

Name of person recording story:

Location:

Date of recording:

**Questions**

**1. Tell me how you (the storyteller) first became involved in the Africa RISING IP activities and what your current involvement is:**

**2. From your point of view, describe a story that typifies the most significant change that has resulted from Africa RISING IP activities (**story should include factual information that makes it clear who was involved, what happened, where and when.

**3. Why was this particular story significant for you?**

**4. Do you have any recommendations or lessons drawn from your story?**

**Domains of change:** -Agriculture sector growth/improved productivity, income, market/

- Gender Integration

- Improved nutrition

- Public Private partnership

- Research and capacity building

-Climate smart development

-Any other change (Innovation)

**References**

de Leon, C., Douthwaite, B., and Alvarez. S. 2009. Most Significant Change Stories from the Challenge Program on Water and Food. *CPWF Working Paper 03,* The CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food, Colombo, Sri Lanka. 93pp.

ILRI. 2015. Africa RISING Ethiopian Highlands Project: Technical report, 1 October 2014–31 March 2015. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI.